

A non-profit non-sectarian educational, social and welfare organization.

"Of the Blind"



"For the Blind"

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June 1972

TO: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

The Honorable Robert Brown of Stillwater, State Senator
The Honorable E. J. Lee of Bagley, State Representative

Gentl men:

Minnesota's State Constitution was adopted in 1857, 115 years ago. During that time numerous additions have been made, resulting in the general clutter that so many years can make. Our lives, too, our way of living, modern inventions, etc. have also resulted in a great deal of progress for all of us. At this time, we are here to advocate a change in our State Constitution and having it rewritten. To us, it seems in order that clarification be made, and we, the physically handicapped, wish to propose that one portion of it be changed in our behalf.

The change we propose is: NO PERSON SHALL BE DENIED EQUAL PROTECTION OF THE LAWS BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL DISABILITY. Article I, Section 19, State of Illinois Constitution.

The State of Illinois has already rewritten its constitution. The states of Wisconsin and North Carolina have passed laws in behalf of protection of the physically handicapped. As secretary of the United Blind of Minnesota, and also in behalf of the blind residents of the State of Minnesota, we urge that our State Legislature consider our proposal.

The second injury provision of the Workman's Compensation law of our state sometimes stands in our way of obtaining adequate education and employment. The University of Minnesota will not grant a teaching certificate to blind graduates. Many employers avoid hiring of blind and otherwise physically handicapped persons for fear of adding to their insurance rates and costs should a handicapped worker sustain further injury. Despite the second injury clause, many blind persons fulfill a variety of employment. To name a few: lawyers, teachers, factory machine operators, assembly workers, secretarial workers, computer programmers, and many more.

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Another problem we have is obtaining individual health and accident policies of insurance. We are continually told that actuary tables show that blind persons have more accidents than their sighted neighbors. No company has ever shown us such tables, and we as blind persons, living with blindness, know it to be a fallacy. Because we cannot see, we take greater care in exercising safety measures.

On July 1 of this year, a law goes into effect in favor of the automobile driver. After a complete stop, he may then make a right turn on a red light. Pedestrians always have the right-of-way in the cross walks. However, the right-turn law will make it necessary to be even more cautious. We will not propose changing the law for the sighted automobile operator, but will have to bring more publicity to the attention of everyone concerning the WHITE CANE LAW. We will have to put forth more effort to make people aware of what the white cane signifies.

It is always necessary for us to work harder to gain better rights, protect the ones we have gained, and keep laws that benefit others from adding to our problems.

Mrs. Lorraine Arvidson